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JAPAN'S POSITION IN THE FAR EAST¹

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The subject assigned to me is "Japan's Position in the Far East." The Himalaya Mountains may be called the fountain head of the two great waves of human energy and endeavor of which all our enlightened modern civilization is the result. From the western slopes there began, in remote time, that Aryan march which established its dominion over the whole of Europe and flowered into occidental civilization. From the mountain's eastern sides there flowed that slower but no less profound tide which we know as orientalism.

The archipelago of Japan stands as the outpost of Asia in the same unique and fortunate position as England does in relation to Europe. Japan's geographical situation has placed it between those two tides of progress; it has been influenced by both eastern and western civilizations, and it is rapidly absorbing and completely assimilating them.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the safety of England was threatened by Napoleon in a way that rendered her position precisely similar to that of Japan to-day. Thus far in the present war we consider that both our conduct and our achievements are not unworthy to be set beside the successes of the Britons of that day. For their Waterloo we can show the campaign that led to the taking of Port Arthur. Let us hope that the impending sea fight may be our Trafalgar.¹

At the close of the China-Japanese War of 1894-95 we took Liaotung peninsula and Port Arthur as our legitimate conquests, but Russia, with the aid of her allies, France and Germany, brought such a weight of international pressure to bear upon us, that we

¹ This paper was read April 8, 1905.—EDITOR.

were forced at the cannon's mouth to give up our rightful spoils of victory. What happened? Japan marched out of the peninsula only to see Russia march in behind her and take possession.

Within three years St. Petersburg had made a secret treaty with China by which she made Port Arthur her naval base and extended the Siberian railroad to that important point and to Dalny. Still she was not satisfied, but obtained from Corea valuable timber concessions in the upper region of the Yalu River and proceeded to get the strategical port of Masampo at the southern extremity of Corea.

Then at last we lost belief in Russia's good faith and our suspicions seemed justified. We saw that the Muscovite government aimed to make a triangular naval base by connecting Port Arthur, Masampo and Vladivostock and thus point a littoral as well as a symbolic dagger at the very heart of Japan. But even then we were willing to appeal peaceably for some arrangement that might be made through diplomatic negotiation.

In July, 1903, we proposed to Russia a settlement by which the question of Manchuria and Corea might be arranged amicably. All was in vain; at every turn we were thwarted by the Russian government. Not until all peaceable means had been tried and had failed, did we appeal to arms. Hence it will readily be seen that we are fighting in this war for our national existence, and to defend that independence which is the very life blood of any nation.

The area of Japanese territory is only three times that of the State of New York. Therefore, when we decided to take up arms against the Muscovite—occupying one-sixth of the surface of the earth—not one Japanese was able to see a reasonable chance of our victory. But we made up our minds to fight this war before the world, as a civilized nation, and if we were crushed to death, to leave behind us the record that there was once a nation in Asia, called Japan, that dared to stand up against the power of the brutal Muscovite to defend her national honor and her righteous cause. Even before the war began we realized the complex conditions that we would have to face. We knew that the Russian army and navy would not be our only opponents. Racial and religious questions would be vitally involved in the conflict. We were well aware that Russia would do everything in her power to incite prejudice by declaring that she, as a Christian nation, was going forth to

battle against the heathen nation of Japan. We realized that she would fill Christendom with that absurd slogan, "The Yellow Peril."

With this condition of threatening prejudice we decided that we would fight the war according to the principles of humanity. This intention we have fulfilled absolutely to the letter and indeed beyond it. I could present to you innumerable instances in support of this assertion. Let one suffice. Take the case of the Russian cruiser *Rurick*, which made many sorties out from Vladivostock and frequently fired upon our peaceful merchantmen.

When those vessels were reeling and going down to the bottom of the sea, the passengers jumped overboard and struggled for their lives; but instead of lowering a life-boat, the *Rurick* fired upon the innocent victims, drowning and killing nearly seven hundred, and then calmly returned to Vladivostock.

Three months later, when the same *Rurick* was sunk by Admiral Kamimura's fleet, we lowered every life-boat, picked up six hundred and one of her officers and crew, carried them to Japan and treated them with kindness. Is Russia, then, the Christian nation, and Japan the heathen nation? Loud talking counts for nothing; it is deeds that reveal true Christian humanity.

Another precaution that we took in order that our enemy might have a fair deal is exhibited in the fact that at the outset of the war, we appointed two professors of international law to be attached to each army corps and to each naval squadron, and our commanders are in constant consultation with these advisors, so that we may fight in accordance with international law.

And now, after all these weary months of fighting, Japan can stand before the world and truthfully declare that she has not violated a single principle of international law. But Russia has violated it again and again; and in addition to this violation, our enemies have a curious practice, whenever they break an established rule of warfare, of declaring that Japan has also violated the same rule.

Among the numerous accusations brought against us by the Russian government, is that we had violated the neutral zone west of the Liao River. We investigated and found that we had not done so, but that Russia herself was the offender by reason of having made the bridges across the Liao River, of having encamped on the western side, of having forced the Chinese to sell provisions

to their army, and finally we found that they were guilty of having smuggled contraband of war.

The work of the Japanese branch of the Red Cross Society ought by this time to have thoroughly purged the occidental mind of any delusion it may have had in regard to the ignominious charges of Oriental inhumanity. The splendid efficiency of our Red Cross workers is well proven by the fact that out of all the army's wounded, who have come under their care, only one in every hundred has died. The proportion of those who die of wounds received in naval battles is one and a half out of every hundred. The larger fatality in the navy is owing to more deadly quality of the naval armaments. We have eleven hospital ships and thirty-five hundred doctors and nurses, and their ministrations are bestowed impartially on the wounded, whether they be Japanese or Russians. We treat them alike, friend and foe.

On the contrary the Russian soldiers often come into our lines with the Red Cross badge on the left arm, to reconnoitre our lines and troops. The Hague Conference agreed that each belligerent must wear the uniform of the nation to which it belongs. In Manchuria, Russian soldiers in the disguise of Chinese dress have often come into our lines, but we could not fire upon them, because they appeared like the peaceful Chinese.

When our soldiers showed to the world their bravery in this war, statements were often made in America and Europe that the Japanese are fatalists and have no idea what death is. On the contrary, we fear death just as much as the Western people, but we fear the death of our nation more than we fear individual death. We consider that the death most to be dreaded would be submission to the yoke of the Muscovite. It is patriotism pure and true which makes the Japanese die gallantly. Moreover, we have an old maxim that "A man lives only one life-time, but his name shall live forever." We believe that to die on the battlefield for a righteous cause and for the Emperor is the noblest death man can have.

Moreover, we have been training our soldiers for a long time to build up a military character by moral precepts proclaimed by the Emperor for the guidance and conduct of his soldiers. These precepts are as follows:

First.—To be sincere and loyal: and guard against untruthfulness.

Second.—To respect superiors and be true to comrades; and guard against lawlessness and indolence.

Third.—To obey the command of superiors, irrespective of its nature; and never to resist or disregard it.

Fourth.—To prize bravery and courage and be diligent in the performance of duties; and guard against cowardice and timidity.

Fifth.—To boast not of brutal courage, and neither quarrel with, nor insult, others, so as to incite general hatred.

Sixth.—To cultivate virtue and practice frugality; and guard against extravagance and effeminacy.

Seventh.—To prize reputation and honor; and guard against vulgarity and greed.

These are read aloud every morning after roll call by the officers and repeated by every soldier. A copy of them is also placed in each soldier's berth, where he can see it the last thing at night and the first in the morning. And, better than all else, every one of the rules is implicitly obeyed.

It has often been said that the Japanese are a race of imitators. This is true, but in a very remarkable and worthy sense of imitation.

It is true that we seize upon whatever we see is good in the products of western civilization, but it also must be noted that we never reproduce these products without improving upon them. We have already shown in this war our ability to invent by making improvements in rifles, guns and explosives. The rifle invented by General Murata and bearing his name, Major Arisaka's mountain, field and siege gun, and Major Shimose's improved smokeless powder are instances of the fertility and value of our adaptation and improvement.

Our sanitary arrangements in this war have been acknowledged by the whole world the best ever known. We have received no treasure from the occident that we have not returned with some improvement.

During the last few years, England, Japan and the United States have been rapidly increasing their trade with China, as is shown by the reports of foreign trade of China. Thus the three nations naturally advocate the "open door policy." The following table will show the relative positions of England, Japan and the

United States in the commercial relations between China and the foreign countries.

Chinese foreign trade (estimated in taels) 1902:

IMPORTS FROM		EXPORTS.	
Hong Kong.....	134,000,000	Hong Kong.....	83,000,000
England	58,000,000	Europe and Asiatic Rus-	
Japan.....	35,000,000	sia	51,000,000
India	33,000,000	Japan.....	28,000,000
United States	30,000,000	United States	25,000,000
Europe and Asiatic Rus-		England.....	10,000,000
sia	19,000,000	India	3,000,000

This war is not simply a conflict between Russia and Japan, it is the struggle between continental militarism and maritime commercialism. The first, represented by Russia, France and Germany, is leaning toward the dismemberment of the Chinese Empire, whereas, England, the United States and Japan are advocating what will be for the interest of the world's commerce and are always striving for the "open door policy" in China. In this war, Japan, beside fighting for her national existence, for international righteousness and for universal humanity, is fighting to maintain the "open door policy" in China, to prevent the unjust partition of the Celestial Empire, and to introduce Anglo-Saxon civilization into the Far East.